

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An image formation apparatus comprising:
  - a latent image support;
  - a latent image formation unit which forms a latent image  
5 on the latent image support;
  - a developer support which supports a liquid developer containing a toner dispersed in a carrier liquid;
  - a developing unit which develops the latent image on the latent image support by a liquid developer supported on  
10 the developer support;
  - a transfer unit which transfers a manifest image on the latent image support developed by the liquid developer to a transfer material; and
  - a developing nip width setting unit which sets the width  
15 of the developing nip, being the size in the moving direction on the surface of the developer support and of the latent image support, in a portion at which the developer support comes in contact with the latent image support, to a predetermined size.
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2. The image formation apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the developing nip width setting unit has:
  - an elastic surface layer which forms the surface of the developer support; and
  - 25 a pressurizing unit which makes the developer support

apply pressure to the latent image support to thereby form a developing nip, and

the width of the developing nip in the developing nip is set to a predetermined size by adjusting the size of the press-contacting pressure of the pressurizing unit.

3. The image formation apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the developer support is constructed so as to be able to move in the direction of pressurizing the latent image support, and the pressurizing unit has an energizing unit which energizes the developer support with respect to the latent image support.

4. The image formation apparatus according to claim 3, wherein there is provided a spacer member which restricts the moving quantity of the developer support with respect to the latent image support, and the size of the energizing force of the energizing unit is set to at least a force necessary for the developer support to move until being restricted by the spacer member.

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5. The image formation apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the developer support and the latent image support are formed by a roller member, respectively, and the size of the pressurizing force of the pressurizing unit is set by a distance between axes of the roller members.

6. The image formation apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the pressurizing unit has a pressurizing force adjusting unit which adjusts the size of the pressurizing force.

5 7. The image formation apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a developing nip width change unit which changes the width of the developing nip.

8. The image formation apparatus according to claim 7,  
10 wherein the latent image support is formed in a belt.

9. The image formation apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the developer support is formed in a belt.

15 10. The image formation apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the developer support is a developing roller in a roller form, and the developing nip width change unit comprises an elastic surface layer which forms the surface of the developing roller, and an encroaching quantity change unit which changes  
20 the encroaching quantity of the latent image support with respect to the developing roller.

11. The image formation apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the encroaching quantity change unit comprises an  
25 eccentric cam which shifts the axial position of the developer

support or the axial position of a support roller which supports the belt-like developer support by rotation.

12. The image formation apparatus according to claim 7,  
5 wherein the developing nip width change unit comprises a plurality of developer supports, and a developer support approaching and separating unit which makes at least one of the plurality of developer supports approach and separate from the surface of the latent image support.

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13. The image formation apparatus according to claim 12, wherein the developer support approaching and separating unit comprises an eccentric cam which shifts the axial position of the developer support or the axial position of a support  
15 roller which supports the belt-form developer support by rotation.

14. The image formation apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:

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a liquid removal member which has an elastic layer on the surface, and removes a liquid developer remaining after development on the latent image support, towards the downstream side in the moving direction of the developer support on the surface of the latent image support; and

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a liquid removal member pressurizing unit which

pressurizes the latent image support by the liquid removal member to thereby form a removal nip,

wherein the removal nip width in the removal nip is set to a predetermined size by the size of the pressurizing force  
5 of the liquid removal member pressurizing unit.

15. The image formation apparatus according to claim 14, wherein the liquid removal member is constructed so as to be able to move in the direction of pressurizing the latent image  
10 support, and the liquid removal member pressurizing unit has a liquid removal member energizing unit which energizes the liquid removal member with respect to the latent image support.

16. The image formation apparatus according to claim 15,  
15 wherein there is provided a spacer member which restricts the moving quantity of the liquid removal member with respect to the latent image support, and the size of the energizing force of the energizing unit is set to at least a force necessary for the liquid removal member to move until being restricted  
20 by the spacer member.

17. The image formation apparatus according to claim 14, wherein the liquid removal member pressurizing unit has a liquid removal member pressurization adjusting unit which adjusts  
25 the size of the pressurizing force.

18. The image formation apparatus according to claim 1,  
wherein at least one of the developer support and the liquid  
removal member comprises an approaching and separating unit  
which makes it approach and separate from the latent image  
5 support.

19. The image formation apparatus according to claim 1,  
wherein at least one of the developer support and the liquid  
removal member is formed by at least two layers comprising  
10 an inner layer consisting of an elastic body and a surface  
layer consisting of a resin.

20. The image formation apparatus according to claim 19,  
wherein the inner layer is made of a recon rubber, and the  
15 surface layer is made of PFA.